

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 8205

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLOS
SUBJECT: STRATEGY FOR INTERSESSIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON LAW OF THE SEA

REF: STATE 298001

1. THE SAG HAS FORMED A PERMANENT COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER
LAW OF THE SEA MATTERS. THE COMMITTEE CONSISTS OF MEMBERS
FROM: THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (FOR EXPERTISE IN MATTERS
RELATING TO PETROLEUM, MINERALS AND POLLUTION); THE MINISTRY
OF INTERIOR (TO WHICH THE COAST GUARD BELONGS); MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE (FOR FISHERY AFFAIRS); THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE
(FOR MATTERS RELATING TO NATIONAL SECURITY); AND THE MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PLAYS THE
DOMINANT ROLE. MAJOR DECISIONS ARE MADE AT CABINET LEVEL
LARGELY ON THE ADVICE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

2. THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE AND INFLUENTIAL INDIVIDUAL
DEALING WITH LOS MATTERS IS MOHAMMED OMAR MADANI, LEGAL
ADVISOR TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION
AND CONFERENCE AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE. MADANI HAS BEEN ON THE
SAUDI LOS DELEGATIONS TO CARACAS, GENEVA AND NEW YORK. HE
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IS KNOWN (WE BELIEVE WELL AND FAVORABLY) TO US DELEGATES TO
SESSIONS OF THE LOS CONFERENCE. DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS ABDULRAHMAN AL MANSOURI, A
COLUMBIA-TRAINED LAWYER, COULD BE INFLUENTIAL IN SHAPING
SAG LOS POLICY BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT HE HAS HERETOFORE
BECOME DEEPLY INVOLVED IN LOS MATTERS.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD AL FAISAL IS CONVINCED OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CURRENT LOS NEGOTIATION AND THE NEED FOR RAPID AGREEMENT IF THERE IS TO BE A TREATY. WE DO NOT BELIEVE HE IS PARTICULARLY WELL VERSED IN LOS MATTERS BUT HE IS A QUICK STUDY AND HE HAS STRONG INFLUENCE WITHIN THE SAG AND IS RESPECTED IN THE REGION.

4. DESPITE SAUDI ARABIA'S REGIONAL POWER AND INFLUENCE WE DO NOT THINK IT WILL BE EASY TO PERSUADE THE SAG TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN LOBBYING WITH OTHER STATES. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE SAG TRADITIONALLY AVOIDS CONTROVERSY AND TAKING OF SIDES IN ISSUES NOT OF DIRECT CONCERN TO ITSELF. SECONDLY, WE BELIEVE THAT THE SAG HAS BASICALLY ONLY ONE MAJOR CONCERN IN THE LOS CONFERENCE: FREEDOM OF PASSAGE IN STRAITS. THE SAG IS A STRONG PROPONENT OF FREEDOM OF PASSAGE AND HAS WORLDWIDE CONCERN FOR THE PRINCIPLE. IT IS ALREADY, HOWEVER, DEEPLY INVOLVED WITH ITS REGIONAL NEIGHBORS (WITH WHOM IT HAS MAXIMUM INFLUENCE) IN DISCUSSION ON THE STRAITS QUESTION.

4. THE SAG MIGHT WELCOME A VISIT BY U.S. LOS EXPERTS, BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD BE USEFUL NOW. ASIDE FROM MADANI, THERE ARE FEW PEOPLE IN THE KINGDOM WITH DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF OR INTEREST IN LOS MATTERS. WHEN CONSULTATIONS HAVE PROCEEDED TO THE POINT WHERE A FEW MAJOR ISSUES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED, AN APPROACH TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER OR OTHER HIGH OFFICIALS WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE. WHETHER THIS WOULD BE ENHANCED BY A VISIT OF LOS EXPERTS COULD BEST BE DETERMINED AT THE TIME.
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5. IN THE MEANTIME, BELIEVE THE BEST WAY OF DRAWING THE SAG INTO THE LOS CONSULTATIONS WOULD BE TO PROVIDE THE EMBASSY WITH AS MUCH MATERIAL AS POSSIBLE (INCLUDING CLASSIFIED INFORMATION WHEN FEASIBLE) WHICH WE CAN PASS TO MADANI (THE SAUDIS HAVE AN UNBLEMISHED RECORD TO DATE IN PROTECTING INFORMATION WE PASS THEM IN CONFIDENCE). ADDITIONALLY, IT MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR A SENIOR MEMBER OF OUR LOS TEAM WHO KNOWS MADANI TO BEGIN CORRESPONDING WITH HIM (THROUGH THE EMBASSY PLEASE. WE MUST BE FULLY INFORMED OF WHAT OUR SIDE IS TELLING SAUDI OFFICIALS IF WE ARE TO BE EFFECTIVE IN HANDLING THE QUESTION HERE.)
PORTER

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